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Central Intelligence Agency

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Washington, D.C. 20505

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7 May 1982

Honorable Benjamin S. Rosenthal
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Consumer and Monetary Affairs
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

George Lardner's May 7, 1982 article "Panel Votes to Bare Arab Investments Report," reports that your Subcommittee staff had accused several of my congressional relations officers of attempting to "commandeer" a stenographer who is an employee of the House of Representatives. I have been assured that this is utterly untrue. It appears that whoever made any such charge does not regularly deal with classified hearings, and does not understand the practices which the Executive Branch and congressional committees have followed for years in protecting the sensitive classified information which appears in transcripts of closed hearings.

The customary and long established procedure for dealing with classified stenographic notes from closed hearings is for our Office of Security to provide officers to accompany the stenographic materials from the hearing room to the stenographer's working area to convert them into a transcript. If the stenographer plans to produce the transcript at a later time, our Security officers store the material in a secure area at CIA Headquarters. Thereafter, at any time when the House stenographer is ready to convert the stenographic materials into a transcript, our Security officers take the material to him. Our officers provide physical security for the classified information, and that is their sole function. We have followed this procedure regularly with the Intelligence, Appropriations, and Foreign Affairs Committees of the Congress and have never run into any difficulty, let alone the type of strident attack which George Lardner reported in the Washington Post of May 7th.

The statement that the stenographer "would have been whisked away to Langley," is particularly offensive. That statement could not have been made in good faith. Indeed, the stenographer himself told your staff on the spot that what we were doing was the normal procedure and it matched the regular instructions he had from the House Clerk's Office. Lest the

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American people be misled into thinking that CIA has misbehaved when it merely sought to follow a long established and accepted procedure, the misinformation your staff seems to have given to the press needs to be corrected.

Mr. Chairman, I am concerned that the matter seems to be getting out of hand and that there has been a loss of perspective. Somehow we seem to be forgetting that the product produced by the CIA and provided to your Subcommittee was an excellent one. Indeed it is the high quality of our intelligence product that is the cause of the present dispute. It is vital that this Agency be able to cooperate with the various committees of the Congress. The Congress has always recognized a corresponding responsibility in its use and handling of information we provide to assure it does not adversely impact on the ability of this Agency to continue to gather information vital to our Nation's interest.

I realize that the issue of your desire to publish information from seventeen classified CIA documents has been a difficult one to resolve amicably. I do hope that we can restore the spirit of cooperation evidenced by our continuing relationship over the past four years.

Sincerely,

William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence

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